

**DCLU****Director's Rule 13-92**

CITY OF SEATTLE

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<b>Applicant</b>  CITY OF SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF CONSTRUCTION AND LAND USE	<b>Page</b> 1	<b>of</b> 7	<b>Supersedes</b> DR 17-91
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	<b>Code and Section Reference</b> Chpt. 23, Land Use Code Chpt. 25, SEPA		
	<b>Type of Rule</b> Review Criteria		
<b>Subject</b>  Landscape Standards for Compliance with the Land Use Code and SEPA Requirements	<b>Ordinance Authority</b> 3.06.040 SMC		
<b>Index</b> Land Use/Technical Standards and Procedural Requirements	<b>Approved</b> <i>R. F. Krochalis</i>		<b>Date</b> 7/1/92

This rule provides information for applicants who are required to submit a landscape plan. The Land Use Code requirements for landscaping in all zones are supplemented in this rule.

**Purpose**

The Land Use Code and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) require landscaping in order to accomplish many goals: to mitigate adverse impacts of a project such as height, bulk and scale, to buffer incompatible uses, to provide screening, to increase the amount of permeable surfacing and thereby reduce drainage problems and to enhance the beauty of our city. Other benefits include attenuation of headlight and reflective glare, reduction of solid hard surfacing in built environments such as in parking lots, provision of shade and cooling, protection from wind and rain, reduction of dust and pollution, creation of home and food for wildlife, protection of and improvement in air quality, and provision of privacy.

Although Seattle is considered to be in a rainy environment, the rising demands on our water supply, particularly in the summer, require a new look at how we use our limited water resources. The Seattle Water Department estimates that about 50% of the water demand in the summer is for watering gardens, particularly lawns. It is therefore important that the use of drought tolerant or low water usage plants begins to be more widespread. This Rule establishes requirements for drought tolerant plants; future revisions of this Rule may increase the

percentage of plants required to be drought tolerant as nursery stocks increase and property owners begin to realize the benefits.

#### Enforcement of Landscaping Requirements

The property owner is responsible for proper installation, maintenance, and replacement of dead or dying plant material. Property owners may be subject to legal action, as with any other violation of Land Use Code and SEPA conditions, if plants are not installed per approved plan or not maintained. Enforcement is the responsibility of the Construction Inspection Division of DCLU (684-8950), prior to issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy. The Housing and Zoning Division of DCLU (684-7899) is responsible for responding to complaints about zoning noncompliance after the Certificate of Occupancy is issued. Building permits do NOT authorize any activity in the street right-of-way. Only a Street Use Permit from the Seattle Engineering Department authorizes planting, pruning, or removal of plant material in the planting strip.

#### A. Landscape Requirements

1. Twenty-five percent (25%) of all plantings in the required landscape area(s) of the entire lot shall be low water useage or drought tolerant plants (list available from DCLU). These plants shall be segregated from plants requiring considerable irrigation, such as lawns, rhododendrons, azaleas and magnolias. The Director shall have the authority to reduce this requirement for sites which are unsuitable, such as a boggy or marshy site, upon documentation from the applicant on the site conditions.

2. Plant species shall be carefully selected and located on the site to ensure their compatibility with site conditions and enhance their chances of long term survival. Choice of species shall also take into account the specific purposes of the plantings in their particular locations (e.g., screening vs. buffering incompatible uses vs. site enhancement)

#### 3. Trees.

a. Size: On private property, deciduous trees at the time of installation shall be at least 1-1/2 inches in diameter measured 6 inches in height above the ground. For multi-stemmed trees, there must be at least 3 stems and the tree shall be at least 6 ft. tall.

Evergreen trees shall be at least 4 feet in height above the ground.

For purposes of this Rule, trees shall have a mature height of at least 15 feet.

Trees installed in the planting strip may only be planted when a Street Use Permit has been issued by the Seattle Department of Engineering.

In order to insure that the tree species chosen will not need excessive pruning or eventual removal to avoid interference with utility lines, the applicant should contact City Light when a tree is proposed to be planted under a power line, whether in the planting strip or on private property.

b. Protection: Trees and shrubs bordering driveways and parking areas shall be protected from vehicles by wheel stops or other similar devices, which shall be shown on the landscape plan.

c. Identification: The species identification nursery tag shall remain on at least two trees per species until the final Certificate of Occupancy has been issued. After issuance, the owner shall remove the tags to prevent damage to the trees.

d. Quantity required:  
When landscaping is required, the number of trees and shrubs planted on lots in single family and multifamily zones (when not otherwise specified by the Land Use Code) shall be determined by lot size as follows:

<u>Property Size (in sq. ft.)</u>	<u>Minimum Number Required Trees</u>
Less than 7500	1 tree/1000 sq. ft.
7500 to less than 15,000	*9 trees OR 1/1100 sq. ft.
15,000 to less than 30,000	*17 trees OR 1/1200 sq. ft.
30,000 and over	*30 trees OR 1/1300 sq. ft.

\* Whichever requirement produces the greater number of trees shall apply.

Any fraction up to and including one-half shall be disregarded, and fractions over one-half shall be rounded up. When the Land Use Code specifies the number of required trees and shrubs in setbacks, e.g., for small institutions in multifamily zones, those trees and shrubs shall count toward fulfilling the above "Minimum Number Required."

#### 4. Shrubs.

a. Size: Shrubs which are required for the purpose of screening such as around parking lots, loading areas, and trash pickup, shall be evergreen and at least 30 inches high when planted. All other required shrubs shall be at least 18" high when planted.

b. Quantity required: At least twice as many shrubs as the required number of trees in the above chart shall be provided.

5. Ground covers.

a. Description: Ground covers include low growing plants such as grass, vines, ground-hugging conifers and some herbaceous plants. For purposes of this rule, chipped wood and similar mulching materials are not acceptable substitutes for ground cover.

b. Spacing: In order to accomplish complete coverage of bare soil by ground cover within 3 years, spacing for ground cover plants shall be: 2-1/2 inch pots shall be spaced 12 inches on center (o.c.); 4 inch pots - 18 inches o.c.; and 1-gallon containers 36 inches o.c. Different spacing of particular species to accomplish complete coverage within three years may be accepted if documentation is submitted by a landscape expert, defined in Section B.2. At maturity ground cover is expected to extend to the drip line of coniferous trees and to within 12 inches of the trunk of broadleaf trees.

6. Landscaping of required open space for ground-related dwelling units: patios and similar impervious surfaces may occupy a maximum of 50% of the required open space area. Shrubs or other dense view-obscuring vegetation shall line 25% of the perimeter of each private open space in any desired configuration. Reminder: The Land Use Code does not permit parking in required open space.

7. Landscaping of open space at grade in multifamily zones (other than for ground-related dwelling units): Approximately two-thirds of the landscaping of the required open space shall consist of trees, shrubs and ground cover. The number of trees and shrubs are specified in the chart above. The remaining one-third should be designed for useability, such as for recreation or pedestrian access, by treatment with grass, paving, or other useable surfacing.

8. Landscaping of required open space for mixed use projects in commercial zones: This space is intended for use by the residents of the project, not the employees or customers of the nonresidential space. Landscaping shall comprise at least 30% of the open space, with the remainder containing benches, play areas for children, fountains, or similar design to enhance the use of the area.

9. While decks and balconies for individual units may, in some cases, satisfy part of the open space requirements for a project, decks and balconies of individual units are not required to be landscaped.

10. Container landscaping, e.g., on rooftops or on top of below-grade garages, to satisfy open space landscaping requirements: A minimum container planting area equivalent to 30% of the required open space shall be planted with trees, shrubs, flowers or other plant material. Containers for trees shall have a soil depth of at least 48 inches; for shrubs, at least 24 inches; and for ground cover or flowers, at least 12 inches. In the remaining part of the required open space, there

shall be benches, fountains, windscreens, lighting or other amenities to enhance the use of the area. Developers, architects and contractors should be aware of the special design issues involved in container landscaping: structural weight, drainage, soil mix, irrigation and maintenance, in particular. Special attention needs to be paid to selecting species which will tolerate the particular conditions in container landscaping: more wind, more extreme changes in temperature, quicker soil drying, etc. A watering and drainage system is required for all container-landscaped open spaces.

**B. Process Requirements**

1. Three sets of landscape plans shall be included with the Master Use Permit application. The landscape plan may be incorporated into the site plan or provided separately.

2. Projects which have landscaping requirements and contain a) 20 or more residential units, b) 20 or more parking spaces, c) 12,000 or more square feet of commercial or industrial space and/or d) more than 500 square feet of landscaping in containers shall have the landscape plans prepared by a landscape expert, defined as follows: a licensed landscape architect or a certified member of the Washington State Nursery and Landscape Association.

3. The following information shall be provided on all sets of landscape plans:

- a. Lot size;
- b. Total square footage of: 1) required open space, 2) provided open space and 3) required landscaped area;
- c. Number of trees, number of shrubs and quantity of ground cover required;
- d. Both common and botanical names of all plant material;
- e. For parking lots and all other required landscaped areas: dimensions of tree planting area and vehicle stops;
- f. If existing plants are required to be retained, show location, size and species; indicate how the plants will be protected during demolition and/or construction;
- g. For rooftop or container landscaping: a schematic irrigation and drainage plan; size and depth of plant containers;
- h. For street trees: width of planting strip; existing utility lines, poles or meters; any structures located within the planting strip; and species and diameter of the trees.
- i. Specifications for soil improvement.

4. All landscaping shown on the landscape plan, once approved, will be deemed required. If there are optional elements shown on the landscape plan, these landscaping elements shall be clearly delineated by the applicant as "non-required," both pictorially and in the plant

schedule. All landscaping which is required by the Land Use Code or by SEPA conditioning must be shown on the plan as required. II

5. Landscaping in accordance with the approved plan shall be installed prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. An applicant may request that the Director grant an exception to this requirement and issue a temporary Certificate of Occupancy. In order to grant this exception, the Director shall find that installation of the required landscaping is not currently possible (for example, due to drought conditions, the season or the phasing of the project). When a temporary Certificate of Occupancy has been issued, all required landscaping shall be installed within four months after issuance of the temporary Certificate of Occupancy; the Department may consider an extension if the reasons for the delay still exist. The Department shall require the submittal of a bond to insure that landscaping requirements are met, if a final Certificate of Occupancy is approved to be issued prior to completion of the landscape installation. The landscape bond form may be obtained from the Construction Inspector, and shall be for an amount covering the cost of installing the required landscaping. An additional amount may be charged to cover administrative costs. ||

6. Prior to issuance of the final Certificate of Occupancy, the owner or owner's agent shall submit to the Construction Inspector a Declaration which verifies that the approved landscaping has been properly installed per plan. This Declaration shall also include a verification that when street trees are required a Street Use Permit has been obtained from the the Department of Engineering and that the street trees have been planted according to City standards.

When the project contains fewer than 20 units, fewer than 20 parking spaces, less than 12,000 square feet of commercial or industrial space, or less than 500 square feet of landscaping in containers, the Declaration may be signed by the owner, owner's agent, landscape professional, or landscape expert, defined as a licensed landscape architect or a Washington State Nursery and Landscape Association certified landscaper. For larger projects the Declaration must be signed by a landscape expert, as defined above.

7. Species substitution: In signing the Declaration described above, the owner and/or responsible party may authorize certain substitutions of species if the species shown on the approved plan are not available. Any substituted species must be of similar size, appearance and drought tolerance as the approved species, must meet the requirements of the Director's Rule, and must be consistent with any applicable MUP conditions. Substitutions of species identified in a land use permit condition as significant for SEPA mitigation may only be made with approval of DCLU on a revised plan. ||

8. Revisions to the following features of a landscape plan require a plan revision and approval by DCLU: minimum number of trees or shrubs, 11

location of required plantings or planting area, and substitution of species identified as significant for SEPA mitigation.

9. Street trees: A Street Use Permit is required for planting, pruning or removal of vegetation in the planting strip. A change in street tree species from the approved Street Use Permit requires a revision to that permit and approval of the City Arborist. Information may be obtained from the City Arborist at 684-5042.